

C. THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF SOCIALIST WOMEN
AT BERNE, MARCH 26-28, 1915, AND THE INTERNATIONAL
YOUTH CONFERENCE AT BERNE, APRIL 5-7, 1915

The Third International Socialist Women's Conference had been set to meet in connection with the Vienna Congress of the Socialist International in August 1914. After Sarajevo and the Austrian ultimatum it was proposed to hold both the Congress and the Women's Conference in Paris on August 22. The outbreak of the war prevented the holding of these meetings. But in November 1914 the Central Committee of the R.S.D.L. party through the editorial board of *Rabotnitsa*, composed of N. K. Krupskaja, Inessa Armand, Z. Lilina, and L. Stahl, sent a letter to Klara Zetkin suggesting the calling of an unofficial conference in order to unite the Lefts. One month later this letter, which contained the chief postulates of the manifesto of the Central Committee of the R.S.D.L. party and which urged the women of all countries "to remain faithful to socialism" and "to draw the working women into the struggle against every kind of civil peace and in favor of a war against war, a war closely connected with civil war and social revolution," was slightly amended and forwarded as a circular to Left-socialist women of Germany, Austria, England, France, Bulgaria, Holland, and the Scandinavian countries.³⁴

In January Klara Zetkin wrote Inessa Armand that she considered that a conference of Left-socialist women³⁵ would

³⁴ The draft of the circular letter of the editorial board of *Rabotnitsa* is preserved in the Archive of Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute and is cited by Baevsky in "Borba za III Internatsional do Tsimmervalda," *Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia*, No. 4, 1934, p. 27.

³⁵ Archive of Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, Klara Zetkin's letter to I. Armand of January 2, 1915, cited by Baevsky in "Borba za III Internatsional do Tsimmervalda," *Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia*, No. 4, 1934, p. 28. In a letter to N. K. Krupskaja, Therese Schlesinger wrote that "only a very small number of women permit themselves to uphold a point of view which differs from that of the party representatives" and that "they would lose all their influence if they were to speak abroad without the permission of their own organization"; and N. K. Krupskaja summed up the situation as follows: "The English women protested . . . they propose to speak of inoffensive matters, removed from all problems of class struggle. The Dutch and Austrian women prefer a general conference because they are afraid that

be of "great benefit." "But," she added, "in order to carry it out great obstacles and difficulties will have to be overcome. First of all, it will be *difficult to draw a line between the Lefts and the Rights* among the women. Many of them do not know themselves on which side they are; others will hesitate to make a decision; whereas still *others will definitely refuse to take part in a conference of 'Left' women only.*"

The Conference was finally called by Klara Zetkin as Secretary of the International Socialist Women's Bureau.³⁶ Zetkin promised not to invite organizations that had become chauvinist and she intended to hold the Conference in the face of the anticipated opposition of the German and Austrian party administrations. "All our friends," she wrote to Liebknecht, "understand fully that the Women's International is doing preparatory work for a joint action of the big International and that it is the foremost champion of peace. All have promised support. The prospects of our women's activity are very favorable, in spite of the German party Presidium and V. Adler." She intended to notify the German Presidium only when all arrangements had been completed and hoped that both the German and Austrian parties would agree to official participation when they found that continued opposition would be futile.³⁷ In the end, however, the German women were obliged to attend without the official sanction of their party, and there was no Austrian delegate present.

In addition to the German delegates, of whom there were seven including Zetkin, there were four from England repre-

by participating in a conference of Left women they may create friction within their own organizations. Zetkin, who at first was in favor of a conference of the Lefts, now, according to the Dutch women, also favors a general conference." (Archive of Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute; Th. Schlesinger's letter to N. K. Krupskaja of January 28, 1915, and N. K. Krupskaja's letter to A. M. Kollontai of March 12, 1915, cited by Baevsky in "Borba za III Internatsional do Tsimmervalda," *Proletarskaja Revoliutsiia*, No. 4, 1934, pp. 29-30.)

³⁶ Baevsky, "Lenin i Tsimmervaldskaia levaia," *Borba Klassov*, No. 3, March 1934, pp. 35-36; Krupskaya, *Memories of Lenin*, II, 158-62.

³⁷ This letter to Liebknecht, written early in 1915, is given in *Bolshevik*, Nos. 13-14, 1934, pp. 104-107. Zetkin states that funds for the Conference were provided through "the spirit of self-sacrifice of the Dutch women."

sending the Independent Labour party and certain socialist organizations in the British International Women's Council, one from France, three from Holland, two from Switzerland, one from Italy, and one from the Regional Presidium of the Social Democracy of Poland and Lithuania. Next to Germany, Russia had the largest representation, with two delegates from the Menshevik Organization Committee and four from the Bolshevik Central Committee. Two Belgian delegates sent word that they had been refused passports by their government, and letters of greeting were sent by Therese Schlesinger from Austria, by Aleksandra Kollontai from Norway, by the Central Committee of the Polish Socialist party (Levitsa), and by both sections of the Social Democracy of Poland and Lithuania.³⁸

Although the women present came from the Left elements of the socialist parties of their respective countries they were not far enough to the Left to satisfy the Bolsheviks, and the resolutions adopted reflected what Krupskaja called the "goody-goody pacifism of the English and the Dutch," to which Zetkin and the Germans made concessions in order to prevent a breakdown of the Conference.

UNOFFICIAL ACCOUNT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF SOCIALIST WOMEN AT BERNE, MARCH 26-28, 1915

[From an Article by Olga Ravich]³⁹

. . . . The Third International Women's Socialist Conference met at Berne at the end of March 1915.

There were delegations from Germany, France, Switzerland, Holland, Poland, and Russia. In all about thirty persons arrived at the Conference. The Austrian women did not come, and limited themselves merely to sending greetings. The coming of the delegates was made difficult by police-military conditions, and by the leading official organs of the socialist parties. The German delegation came to the Conference in

³⁸ I. Izolskaia, *Internatsionalnaia zhenskaia sotsialisticheskaia konferentsiia*, "Nashe Slovo, No. 63, April 13, 1915, pp. 1-2. The British were represented by Dr. Marion Phillips, Mary Longman, Margaret Bondfield, and Ada Salter (I.L.P., *Report of the Annual Conference, 1915*, p. 15).

³⁹ O. Ravich, "Mezhdunarodnaia zhenskaia sotsialisticheskaia konferentsiia 1915 g.," *Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia*, No. 10 (45), 1925, pp. 165-77.

spite of the fact that its party centers had forbidden it to attend; it actually represented a delegation from the opposition. The French delegate from the Left section of the party also participated. The official group of the French socialist women refused to take part in the Conference. The English delegation was from the Independent Labour party. All the other delegates were from official parties.

Russia was represented by two delegations: that of the Central Committee, which consisted of five persons—Sablina (Nadezhda Konstantinovna), Inessa, Elena (Rozmirovich), Zina (Lilina), and Anna [Kaminskaia] (representative of Poland)—and that of the Menshevik Organization Committee, which consisted of two persons, Balabanoff and Irina Izolskaia.

The return trip of the delegates was made so difficult that it was decided not to mention the names of the delegates anywhere. The speakers were indicated by the countries they represented. This explains why there is no complete list of names of those who attended the Conference.

The chairman of the Conference, Klara Zetkin, opened the Conference with a brief speech on the situation then existing in all countries and on the duty of the working women to lead a movement against the war. She proposed that the Conference constitute the third regular International Women's Socialist Conference. This proposal was unanimously adopted.⁴⁰

The Conference began with brief speeches of welcome, which were designed to establish the actual composition of the Conference, i.e., to show what the delegates had brought with them and what they expected from the Conference.

The Swiss delegation, in spite of its declaration that the Swiss women were ready for international struggle and its expression of sorrow that some of the comrades had abandoned the road of internationalism, immediately pointed out that the hour to judge these comrades had not yet come. As to its means of struggle against the war the delegation did not go farther than a demand for peace.

The English delegation, with an obvious feminist tinge, asserted that all women in England, even bourgeois women and suffragettes, were against the war and wished for peace. The delegation expressed its hope

⁴⁰ Balabanoff writes: "The women's conference . . . was not an official conference, for reasons which can be well understood. The women comrades who took part in it acted neither as representatives of definite organizations nor of definite party presidiums, but on their own responsibility" ("Die internationale Frauenkonferenz zu Bern," *Lichtstrahlen*, No. 10, April 25, 1915, p. 192). The official report in *Beilage zur Berner Tagwacht*, No. 77, April 3, 1915, p. 1, does not mention this resolution, and the resolution quoted below refers to this as an "extraordinary" conference.

that this war would be the last war and that the soldiers would stop shooting.

The German delegation, after pointing out the great significance of the fact that representatives of various countries had succeeded in meeting and in giving each other their hands in brotherly solidarity, and that the German women, most of all, were depressed by the collapse of socialism, further expressed the hope that the masses would follow the internationalists instead of the official parties and stressed the necessity of building a new International.

The Russian delegation of the Central Committee of the Russian Social Democratic Labor party (Bolsheviks) reported on the attitude of the masses, the protests against the war, and the trial of the Duma group, and stated the party's viewpoint on current events.

The Russian delegation of the Organization Committee (Mensheviks) declared that there was no *Burgfrieden* ("civil peace") in Russia, that German Social Democracy had committed treason against socialism, and that this had affected adversely the revolutionary struggle in Russia. It concluded with a wish for a democratic peace.

The French delegation pointed out that in France there were few internationalists, that they placed all their hope in the fact that their comrades in other countries were stronger. It was difficult for them to work, not only on account of the police conditions⁴¹ but even to a greater extent on account of the persecutions from their own party. All their hope was placed on the masses.

From all that was expressed in the welcoming speeches it was clear that the delegates who met spoke different languages. The prevailing conception was that the fundamental task was the struggle for peace. No one had the slightest idea about passing over to civil war. A break with the leaders who had betrayed socialism was not suggested by anyone. This circumstance put a definite stamp on the work of the Conference.

The following agenda of the Conference was accepted:

1. International activity of women in favor of peace (*Friedensaktion*)
2. Struggle against high cost of living
3. How women must struggle against nationalism and chauvinism

Klara Zetkin was the speaker on the first question. As the question about the *Friedensaktion* (struggle for peace) was the most fundamental question at the Conference, a written resolution on that question had been distributed among the delegates beforehand. This resolution was

⁴¹ See Louise Saumoneau, "The Case of Louise Saumoneau," *The Socialist Review*, No. 76, January-March, 1916, pp. 44-50, in which she tells of her experiences with the police and her party on her return from Berne.

on behalf of the International Secretariat of the women's socialist organizations. . . .⁴²

The delegation of the Central Committee put forward its own draft resolution.⁴³ This draft was composed on the basis advanced earlier in the manifesto of the Central Committee (see No. 33 of *Sotsial-Demokrat*). It especially emphasized the necessity of transforming the imperialist war into a civil war, of leading a wide revolutionary activity in the masses—through illegal organizations in places where it could not be done legally—by disclosing the lies of the “defense of the fatherland” slogan, and by advancing the slogan of the Third International. This draft resolution also put plainly and simply the question of the necessity of a complete break with the official leaders of the party who had betrayed socialism.

The French delegate submitted her draft resolution, but after receiving some corrections from her group in Paris—these corrections could be summarized as follows: opposition to the voting of war credits and to having socialists enter bourgeois cabinets—with which she did not agree, she withdrew her resolution.⁴⁴

Hence, after Zetkin's report, in which she defended on the whole her own resolution, debates on the two resolutions began.

The late Inessa Armand spoke in defense of the Russian resolution. With amazing precision and clearness she presented reasons for every postulate advanced in the draft resolution. She declared that the women who had gathered at the Conference were first of all socialists. The aim of the Conference was to co-ordinate international activity, not only in the work for peace but in socialist activity as a whole. . . .

“We Social Democrats who adhere to the Central Committee consider,” Inessa declared, “that the slogan of civil war must be advanced now and that the labor movement is now entering upon a new phase in the course of which socialism will be attained in the more advanced countries, and a democratic republic in the more backward countries.” (At that time this way of putting the question was considered by our

⁴² See below, pp. 297-300.

⁴³ English translation is given in Lenin, *The Imperialist War*, pp. 472-73.

⁴⁴ Louise Saumoneau, who represented the Comité d'Action Féminine Socialiste pour la Paix et contre le Chauvinisme, said that they should not discuss questions other than those dealt with in the resolutions of the international congresses; they should discuss peace and not the parties' conduct. She did not oppose the voting of war credits or socialist participation in bourgeois cabinets but she did oppose illegal activities. She said further that she believed that the corrections to her resolutions sent by the group she represented were “the result of the influence of the Russian comrades and I consider this influence harmful.” (From Krupskaja's notes. Bantke, “Lenin i Tsimmervaldskoe dvizhenie vo Frantsii,” *Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia*, No. 3, 1934, p. 118.)

party to be absolutely correct [Author's note]). "The working women should be told directly that peace can be attained through revolution and that real salvation from war lies in socialism."

The debates which followed really revolved around the resolution of the Russian delegation. In the main the speakers could not present serious arguments against this resolution. Some of them even stressed the correctness of treating the fundamental question that way but — still felt that it should not be accepted. The objections were as follows: the peace Conference is not the place to discuss these questions; the examination of the conduct of the socialist parties is a matter for general international congresses; this Conference should not be transformed into a tribunal to pass one-sided verdicts; a discussion of these questions would call forth an unnecessary sharpening of relations and would create new obstacles to the activities for peace; the time to appeal for a revolution had not yet come; when the workers should have returned from the front, when from every family one or more persons should be missing and there would be material ruin in addition, anger would be so great that revolution would flare up inevitably.

Many of those who at that time argued in this way, now understand their error — but at that time they were in the majority. The truly revolutionary resolution was declined by twenty-one votes. Only six hands of the Russian delegation were raised in its favor.

The resolution of the International Secretariat of the women's organizations was adopted by the same number of votes (twenty-one against six)—a resolution that was rather vague and which did not touch on any of the fundamental questions of action.

That then is how the most fundamental question was solved. Not at all as the Bolsheviks had wished.

The Russian delegation of the Central Committee submitted the following declaration:

"We vote against the resolution accepted by the Conference for the following reasons:

"International socialism as a whole is passing through a tremendous crisis.

"Our Conference has assembled at a moment when the Workers' International has fallen to pieces, when a new building of the Third International must be erected under great hardships. The first condition for this undertaking would be to look straight and fearlessly into the eyes of truth, to express openly the whole truth concerning the causes of the internal crisis of the socialist parties. 'Diplomacy' in the labor movement has already caused great harm to our cause. No further step can be taken without putting an end to it.

"The tactics of the official leaders of the socialist parties with regard

to the war are not merely mistakes but are actual *treason* against the cause of socialism. Opportunism has for a long time been leading toward this fatal outcome and has finally achieved it. The opportunists have replaced socialism with imperialism. In no country can we socialists, who have remained such, take even one step forward without engaging in a sharp struggle against the opportunists and the social chauvinists. It is our duty to tell this to the men and women workers. There is no more fatal point of view than the position of the so-called 'Center' headed by Kautsky, Adler, and others, the 'Center' which disguises the basic controversies between the socialists and the opportunists who serve directly the bourgeoisie and the governments.

"Our resolution had to express this in one form or another. Our Conference could become the first nucleus of the future Third International if it would take a decisive stand against opportunism. This we wished to accomplish in our draft resolution. Almost all the delegates who spoke expressed solidarity with the basic principles of our resolution. We believe that if a solidarity in principle had actually existed we should have expressed it in a resolution which would have fully and definitely treated this question.

"At the same time we declare that we will support every practical move in the direction of the revolutionary mass struggle and a struggle against social chauvinism, in spite of the fact that the resolution which was accepted does not satisfy us."

The next question concerned a struggle against the high cost of living. . . .

A resolution was accepted with regard to the high cost of living which appealed to the working women for a most decisive struggle against the high cost of living and speculation. This resolution was unanimously accepted.

The next question, the struggle against nationalism and chauvinism, again brought the Conference to a clash with the Russian delegation of the Central Committee.

The picture of chauvinism, of hatred of other nations, and of narrow nationalism, which rose out of the speeches of the delegates, was so vivid that there could be no doubt about the necessity of repudiating chauvinism. All the delegates unanimously asserted that chauvinism had deep roots, that as a matter of fact there had been a deficiency in socialist education. For instance, Klara Zetkin said that not all socialists clearly understood that socialism was not a simple political doctrine but a world philosophy. In order swiftly to overcome nationalism and chauvinism it would be necessary for the masses to think, feel, and act in the spirit of socialism.

There was nothing else to do but to begin immediately a widespread

mass agitation in favor of socialism and against nationalism. Influence in the schools had to be attained at any price—schools in which chauvinism and nationalism were especially strong and were already bringing sad results.

The Russian delegation of the Central Committee was opposed to such vagueness and again attempted to put the question squarely. Among other things the delegation declared:

“It is absolutely necessary to struggle against *Burgfrieden* (civil peace), against the ‘defense of the fatherland’ slogan, against the voting of war credits, against entering bourgeois cabinets. It is necessary to promote fraternizing in the trenches —.

“The most effective measure against any kind of nationalism is, of course, a close connection between the proletariat of all countries and, in particular, international labor action. The International has met and accepted general decisions but has not undertaken any joint actions. The future new International will have to pass over to joint revolutionary actions —. In the struggle against the war the proletariat must persevere to the end and must not fear a defeat of the fatherland. Such a defeat would only facilitate the revolutionary struggle and civil war of the proletariat.”

As a first practical step the organization of an international bulletin was recommended, or at least the collaboration in socialist periodicals of socialists of various countries.

It stands to reason that the Conference did not agree with the Russian delegation on that question either. At the very end the Conference considered it necessary to accept a resolution of sympathy and approval with respect to all attempts to re-establish peace. The resolution read:

“The Conference gladly welcomes all attempts of nonsocialists directed toward the attainment of peace, and it welcomes with special sympathy the international movement of the nonsocialist women in favor of peace, and sends its fraternal greeting to the international congress of pacifists which will take place at The Hague in the near future.”

This resolution, which was introduced quite unexpectedly by the English delegation, called forth a protest on the part of the Russian delegation of the Central Committee, a protest which can easily be understood. The Russian delegation wished to call the women socialists to action and did not hope for anything from the pacifist Congress. This resolution seemed to ridicule the entire work of the Conference.

However, the resolution was accepted by the votes of all delegates except the Russian delegates of the Central Committee and the Polish delegate.

The unanimously accepted resolution of protest against the arrest and prosecution of the Russian Social Democratic Labor group in the State

Duma and against the arrest of Rosa Luxemburg in Germany could not rectify the line traced at the Conference by the majority of delegations⁴⁵

MANIFESTO OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF SOCIALIST WOMEN AT BERNE, MARCH 1915⁴⁶

Women of the working people!

Where are your husbands?

Where are your sons?

For eight months they have been out on the battlefields. They have been torn away from their work and their homes—youths, the support and hope of their parents, men in the prime of life, and men with hair turning gray—the providers of their families. They are all clad in uniforms, live in trenches, and are ordered to destroy that which has been built up by diligent labor.

Millions of them already rest in common graves. Thousands upon thousands have been taken to hospitals with lacerated bodies, shattered limbs, blinded eyes, wrecked minds, seized by epidemic diseases or prostrated by exhaustion.

Burned villages and towns, ruined bridges, devastated fields, and destroyed forests are evidences of their deeds.

Proletarian women!

You were told that your husbands and sons departed to defend you, feeble women, your children, your houses, and your hearths.

What is the real truth?

A double burden has been imposed upon the shoulders of you "weaker" women. Defenseless, you have been delivered up to sorrow and misery. Your children starve and freeze and you are threatened with the loss of shelter; your hearth is cold and empty.

You were told of a great brotherhood and sisterhood between high and low, of civil peace between poor and rich. Now civil peace manifests itself by the *owners of enterprises reducing your wages, the merchant and the unscrupulous profiteer raising prices, and the landlord threatening to put you out into the street.* The state is parsimonious and *bourgeois philanthropy is cooking poor-man's soup and advising you to be economical.*

⁴⁵ The account of the Conference given more briefly in an official report corresponds with that given above ("Internationale sozialistische Frauenkonferenz in Bern. Offizieller Verhandlungsbericht," *Beilage zur Berner Tagwacht*, No. 77, April 3, 1915). Short notices are given in *Labour Leader*, No. 14, April 8, 1915, p. 7, and *L'Humanité*, No. 4006, April 6, 1915, p. 1.

⁴⁶ *Berner Tagwacht*, No. 77, April 3, 1915, p. 1. An incomplete text of this manifesto in English appeared in *Labour Leader*, No. 22, June 3, 1915, p. 8.

What is the purpose of this war which brings you such terrible suffering?

It is said that this is done for the welfare and the defense of the fatherland.

What is the welfare of the fatherland?

Should it not be the well-being of the many millions of people whom the war turns into corpses, cripples, unemployed, beggars, widows, and orphans?

Who endangers the welfare of the fatherland? Is it the men who are across the frontier in different uniforms who desired this war just as little as did your husbands or who knew just as little why they should murder their brothers? No! The fatherland is *endangered by those who derive their riches from the misery of the broad masses and base their dominance upon oppression.*

Who benefits from the war?

Only a *small minority in every nation.*

The *manufacturers* of rifles and cannon, armor plate and torpedo boats, the *owners of docks*, and the *suppliers of army needs*. In the interest of their own profits they have stirred up hatred among the peoples and have thus caused the outbreak of the war. The war benefits the *capitalists in general*. Is it not true that the labor of the disinherited and exploited masses has accumulated goods which they who have produced them are not allowed to use? Well, they are poor; they cannot pay for them! The *sweat of the workers* produced those goods, the *blood of the workers* must conquer new markets abroad to which those goods can be exported. Colonial lands must be seized where the capitalists can rob the ground of its treasure and exploit cheap labor.

Not the defense of the fatherland but its *expansion* is the *purpose* of this war. Such are the desires of the capitalist order, for without exploitation and oppression of man by man it cannot exist.

The workers have nothing to gain from this war but they are apt to lose all that is dear to them.

Working women and wives of workers!

The men of the belligerent countries have been forced to keep silent. The war has dulled their minds, broken their wills, and deformed their entire beings.

But you women who in addition to the gnawing worry for your loved ones at the front, endure misery and deprivation at home, why do you delay in voicing your will for peace, your protest against the war?"

What deters you?

So far you have *suffered* because of your loved ones, now you should *act* for the benefit of your husbands and your sons.

Enough of slaughter.

This call rings out in all languages. Millions of proletarian women sound this call. It echoes back from the trenches in which the consciences of the nations' sons revolt against the slaughter.

Women of the working people!

In these difficult days the socialist women of Germany, England, France, and Russia have assembled. Your miseries and your sufferings have touched their hearts. For the sake of the future of your loved ones they call upon you to act for peace. As the will of the socialist women is united across the battlefields, so you in all countries must close your ranks in order to sound the call: peace, peace!

The World War has imposed upon you the greatest sacrifice! It robs you of the sons to whom you gave birth in pain and sorrow, and whom you have reared with effort and worry; it robs you of the men who have been your companions in the difficult struggle of life. In comparison to these sacrifices all others are small and void.

All mankind looks to you, proletarian women of the belligerent countries. You must become heroines, redeemers.

Unite! One in will and one in deed!

Proclaim a millionfold what your husbands and sons cannot yet aver: the laboring people of all countries are brothers. Only the united desire of this people can command this slaughter to cease.

Only socialism means future peace among mankind.

Down with capitalism which sacrifices hundreds of people to the wealth and power of the propertied.

Down with war! Onward to socialism!

The International Socialist Women's Conference was attended by comrades from: Germany, France, England, Russia, Poland, Italy, Holland and Switzerland.

BERNE, March 1915

RESOLUTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF SOCIALIST WOMEN AT BERNE, MARCH 1915⁴⁷

The Extraordinary Conference of socialist women, which met at Berne on March 26, 27, and 28, and which was attended by active comrades from Germany, France, England, Russia, Poland, Italy, Holland, and Switzerland, declares that:

The present World War has its roots in capitalist imperialism. It was finally conjured up by the requirements of the exploiting and ruling

⁴⁷ *Beilage zur Berner Tagwacht*, No. 77, April 3, 1915, pp. 1-2. This resolution was drawn up by Klara Zetkin in consultation with the Dutch socialist women and submitted to the British section before the Conference met. (Marion Phillips, "The Women's International," *The Contemporary Review*, No. 593, May 1915, p. 650.)

classes in the different countries. In a competitive struggle against one another they endeavor to spread their exploitation and their dominance beyond the boundaries of their native states. At the same time they fortify and establish permanently their exploitation and their rule over propertyless compatriots. International financial interests—the large armament industries—are continually active among the propertied classes as a special war menace and a war danger. These exploit the nations by driving the states toward competitive armaments.

History will establish what a tremendous responsibility for the outbreak of war falls upon the governments and the diplomacy of various great powers. For eight months the World War has destroyed immeasurable and inestimable quantities of cultural values and caused countless hecatombs of human lives. It has trod upon and disgraced the highest achievements of civilization, the most sublime ideals of humanity. Since its outbreak, it has *violated international law*. This deserves condemnation, for it has been injurious to small, neutral *Belgium*. In the *end* it threatens to *bleed white the peoples which take part in the war* and to cause their complete economic exhaustion. It threatens to paralyze for a long time the socialist forces—the carriers of historic progress.

Above all, the *World War* is *irreconcilably opposed to the interests of the working classes* in both the belligerent and the neutral countries of Europe and all over the world. Under the misleading slogan of preserving the interests of the fatherland through a patriotic fulfillment of duty, it wastes the property and blood of the working people and in order to achieve the aims of capitalist imperialism it demands the energy of the working people, their willingness to sacrifice, and their fighting ability. Thus it places the best proletarian forces at the service of the exploiting and ruling classes.

Under the same slogan, the World War *unites nationally* the workers of the belligerent countries with their exploiters and masters and *separates them internationally* from their brothers, the proletarians across the frontier. In place of the class struggle of the workers for the improvement of their condition and for their ultimate liberation, it puts national "civil peace"; in place of international solidarity it puts international fratricidal slaughter. It separates the peoples not merely by the streams of blood which flow from the battlefields but also by filthy *streams* of hatred, conceit, slander, and outrage. A base chauvinist attitude which disgraces the fatherland rather than contributes to its honor through an unprejudiced recognition of the cultural achievements of other nations has spread. Through all this the World War paralyzes and corrupts nationally the class struggle of the workers and makes more difficult their international advance against their worst enemy, the capitalist order. *It prevents the working class from carrying out its great*

historic mission: the liberation of the proletariat as the accomplishment of the united proletarians of all countries.

Proceeding from these considerations the Extraordinary Conference of socialist women declares *war on this war! It demands the immediate cessation* of this monstrous fight among peoples. It demands *a peace without annexations and without conquests*, a peace which would recognize the right of self-determination and independence of peoples and nationalities—including small ones—and which would not impose humiliating and intolerable conditions upon any of the belligerent states. This peace will be a premise for the liberation of the proletariat of the *belligerent countries* from the *yoke of nationalism*. It will aid the socialist parties and the labor organizations to regain completely their freedom of action for class struggle and as the vanguard of the working masses having a clear purpose to rally these masses around the banner of international socialism.

This Extraordinary Women's Conference is convinced *that an early cessation of the World War can be enforced only by the clear and unswerving will of the masses of the people themselves in the belligerent countries*. This will meet with the active and unanimous support of the socialists and the proletarians of the *neutral states*. It is the most sacred duty of the *socialist women*, especially of the working women, to lead the struggle for peace bravely, with willingness to sacrifice and with the desire for peace born of the profound sorrow caused by the war and proclaiming this desire as a clear and conscious will for peace.

The women's Conference thus urges the socialist and proletarian women of all countries, fearing neither obstacles nor persecutions, not to lose time nor to miss the opportunity of utilizing all the available ways and means to proclaim through mass demonstrations of all kinds their international solidarity and consciousness and their will for peace. This war points out to the *women a historic role* in the *struggle* for peace, which when understood and carried out will have great import for *women's suffrage* and the *success of socialism*.

The women's Conference which has met at this very troubled time, has proved that for the achievement of *one aim*, the *socialist women* of all countries, especially of the *belligerent countries*, are united in the old fraternal faithfulness and in recognition of one great solidarity and duty of unified will and action. The Conference hopes that the proletarian women of all countries will rally as unanimously in support of the *international peace action*. By so doing they would act in the spirit of the International Congresses of Stuttgart, Copenhagen, and Basel, which by unanimous decisions have laid down as the duty of the socialist parties of all countries the following:

"... In case war should break out notwithstanding, it is their duty

to intervene in favor of its speedy termination and with all their powers to utilize the economic and political crisis created by the war to rouse the masses and thereby to hasten the downfall of capitalist class rule."

The women's Conference expects, therefore, *that the socialist parties of all countries will take it upon themselves, quickly, resolutely, and with clear aim, to lead the peoples in their struggle for peace.* The peace action of the socialist women must be the *forerunner* of a general movement of the working masses designed to terminate the fratricidal slaughter. It must mean an important forward step toward the restoration of the Workers' International.

A BOLSHEVIK EVALUATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF SOCIALIST WOMEN

[From a Statement by the Central Committee of the Russian
Social Democratic Labor Party]⁴⁸

. . . . The Conference has not entirely fulfilled the task which had been placed before it by events. The Conference could have marked out the first guideposts for a general socialist struggle of socialists of various countries; it could have laid the cornerstone of the future International. It has not done so

Nevertheless, even within the restricted limits set by the majority of the Conference, the socialist women's Conference was of great significance. It was the first real international Conference since the beginning of the war at which Left women socialists of belligerent countries who in one way or the other went "against the current" met. They may have confirmed incompletely and quite insufficiently in their resolution their principal attitude toward contemporary events and tasks; nevertheless, something has been accomplished in this direction, and in so far as the struggle for peace takes on revolutionary forms the Conference will assist in unifying the international revolutionary struggle of the proletariat. . . .

The "Lefts" have already raised in all countries the banner of socialism. Two world conceptions, two tactics have clashed, have entered a struggle. On the one hand, the tactic of national unity and defense of the fatherland; on the other hand, the tactic of class struggle and international unity of the proletariat, a tactic which, from the very beginning of the war, has been pursued by the Central Committee and by our Social Democratic Labor group in the Duma, the tactic of revolutionary socialism. The irreconcilability, the incompatibility, of these two tactics is being better and better comprehended by their advocates. The International, which will not betray the socialist ideal, can be restored only by uniting the proletariat around the banner of revolutionary socialism

⁴⁸ *Sotsial-Demokrat*, No. 42, May 21, 1915, supplement, p. 2.

and by means of a decisive separation from social patriotism and opportunism. Representatives of the majority at the Conference have taken only a timid, irresolute step, but life will push them ahead and will take what is due it.

One week after the adjournment of the women's Conference an international socialist youth conference opened in Berne. Like the preceding meeting, this was held without the blessing of the official socialist international organization, the Bureau of the International Socialist Youth League. This Bureau had been formed in March 1907 with Henri de Man of Belgium as secretary. The organization was closely connected with and dependent on the Second International, and its two regular conferences in 1907 and 1910 and an informal conference in 1912 were held simultaneously with the Congress of the International at Stuttgart, Copenhagen, and Basel. The Copenhagen Conference of the International Socialist Youth League elected a new bureau consisting of de Man, Höglund (Sweden), Škatula (Bohemia), Krogh (Norway), and Robert Danneberg (Austria), who also served as secretary. It had been planned to hold another conference at Vienna in the summer of 1914 in connection with the regular Congress of the International, and here questions relating to the incorporation of the Youth Bureau in the International Socialist Bureau and to the general organization of a Youth International were to be decided.⁴⁹ When it became clear not only that a meeting at Vienna was out of the question but that the secretary, Danneberg, was disinclined to call a conference on his own responsibility, some of the leaders of the national youth organizations took the initiative. The result was the meeting in Berne which opened on April 5 and which actually was a meeting of the opposition elements in the international youth movement.

There were fourteen delegates in full standing: three from Germany (members of the German Youth League, who opposed the policy of the majority), three from Russia (two

⁴⁹ Münzenberg, *Die sozialistische Jugend-Internationale*, pp. 15-36.

Bolsheviks and one Menshevik), one each from Poland, Holland, Bulgaria, Italy, and Denmark, one representing Norway and Sweden, and two from Switzerland. Platten, Grimm, and Vogel, representatives of the Swiss Social Democratic party, were also present at the meetings.

As appears from Münzenberg's account given below, the Russian delegation objected both to the procedure and to the resolutions of the majority of the Conference and temporarily withdrew. They were, however, persuaded to return; but they failed to secure the adoption of their resolution, the text of which has not been found, or to prevent the adoption of the majority resolution which they severely criticized. The young men and women at the Conference were not prepared to move as far to the left as the Bolsheviks wished, but it is interesting to note that by electing a new bureau and establishing a new secretariat in Switzerland, the socialist youth (at least that part represented at Berne) was seemingly less reluctant than the socialist elders to go ahead with the reconstruction of the socialist international organization broken and disabled by the war.⁵⁰

THE INTERNATIONAL YOUTH CONFERENCE AT BERNE, April 5-7, 1915

[From an Account by Münzenberg]⁵¹

BERNE CONFERENCE

Before the war we maintained a number of international connections. As a result of my trip through Germany a lively correspondence opened with all the youth groups which I had visited. The connections with the Central Committee of the Italian socialist youth organization and with all the groups with which we became acquainted during our trip through Italy in 1912 were never interrupted. In September 1914 we began to

⁵⁰ In addition to Münzenberg's account given below, a brief official report is given in *Berner Tagwacht*, No. 88, April 17, 1915, p. 1; other accounts are given in *Nashe Slovo*, No. 68, April 18, 1915, pp. 1-2, in *Lichtstrahlen*, No. 10, April 25, 1915, pp. 192-93, and by Krupskaya, *Memories of Lenin*, II, 163. See also N. K. Krupskaya's letter to A. Kollontai of May 7, 1915; Archive of the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, No. 18004, cited by Baevsky, "Borba za III Internatsional do Tsimmervalda," *Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia*, No. 4, 1934, p. 32.

⁵¹ V. Miuntsenberg [W. Münzenberg], *S Libknekhthom i Leninym*, pp. 92-102.

correspond actively with the Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, and Italian socialist youth leagues for the purpose of calling a conference of socialist youth organizations which would revive the proletarian Youth International.

In agreement with the youth organizations of these countries, I as secretary of the Swiss Youth League proposed to the International Bureau in Vienna on November 10, 1914, that it should call an international conference of socialist youth organizations not later than the Pentecost of 1915. The International Bureau on a postal card, classically laconic, declared its incompetence to do so.

The card read as follows:

"Respected Comrade! It is entirely impossible at the present moment to tell whether or not we shall be able to hold a congress on the Pentecost of 1915. Therefore, for the time being, I can say nothing definite with regard to your proposal. Greetings!

"DANNEBERG"

We became convinced that it would be impossible to call a conference through the medium of the International Bureau and decided to organize it without the Bureau. Our correspondence became more active and resulted in a number of socialist youth organizations promising to send their delegates to the Conference at Berne during the Easter days of 1915. A negative reply was received only from the French socialist youth organization, which declared that it could not take part in that Conference since the French Socialist party had not yet pronounced itself on that question, whereas the point of view of the youth organization would automatically coincide with that of the party.⁵² The Central Committee of the Austrian socialist youth organization welcomed by letter the calling of a conference but did not send delegates. The Central Bureau of the German Youth Committees, guided as usual by F. Ebert, brusquely declined to participate, and protested against any conference. . . .⁵³

⁵² Bantke writes: "The feelings were different below, in the masses. Particularly in the provinces there was a left-minded socialist youth which wished but could not send delegates to Berne, for the government refused to issue passports. A telegram was dispatched, however, in which a section of the French youth expressed its solidarity with the socialist youth of all countries and promised to work in support of the antimilitarist resolutions adopted by the international congresses prior to the war." (Bantke, "Lenin i tsimmervaldskoe dvizhenie vo Frantsii," *Proletarskaia Revoliutsiia*, 3, 1934, p. 119.) Münzenberg gives the text of a telegram received by the Conference from an independent group of Paris students. The telegram was composed in this same spirit. (Münzenberg, *Die sozialistische Jugend-Internationale*, p. 39.)

⁵³ The letters exchanged in this connection by the initiators of the Berne International Socialist Youth Conference and the various national centers of the youth movement are given in Schüller, *Geschichte der Kommunistischen Jugend-Internationale*, I, pp. 81-93.

The opening meeting of the Conference was held in the hall of the Berne People's House and was an impressive demonstration of the ideas of the international revolutionary socialist youth movement. Aside from the representatives of the socialist youth organizations, the speakers were Robert Grimm from the Presidium of the Swiss Social Democratic party and Angelica Balabanoff from the Italian party.

The first business meeting was taken up with delegates' reports concerning the state and activity of their organizations. In his report on Norway, Olaussen stated that 16,000 members of the Norwegian socialist youth organization made up the nucleus of the Left wing of the Norwegian party. Together with the youth opposition, the Left wing was endeavoring to revolutionize this party. The same was true also of the trade unions.

The representative of the Swedish youth organization, which had 8,000 members, reported a still greater influence exerted upon the Swedish party.

In Denmark the socialist youth organization held a review of 7,000 members. At a recent convention it had worked out thoroughly the question of combating militarism. The Danish youth organization had resolved, in case of mobilization, to carry out a soldiers' strike.

Luteraan made a report on Holland. He stated that the Left-socialist organization, which he represented, in its struggle against the reformist youth organization always insisted on a revolutionary demonstration against war.

Comrade Inessa [Armand] made a report on the situation in Russia. She said that since under Tsarism youth organizations as such in Russia were prohibited by law, they functioned in the form of dramatic societies, literary circles, etc. Many young boys and girls paid dearly for their ruthless struggle against Tsarism. The youth organizations in Russia—said the speaker—were constructed differently from those in Western Europe. In the majority of cases the youth worked jointly with the elders. The Russian labor youth is at present just as internationalist-minded as it was before the war. There the struggle against Tsarism and capitalism and in favor of peace is being continued fearlessly.

Egorov reported on Poland. He said that the Polish laboring youth supported an irreconcilable class struggle. It is against soldiers' strikes and insists on the carrying out of a purposeful class struggle against capitalism.

Minev reported on the youth movement in Bulgaria.

He said that a union of socialist youth had formerly existed in Bulgaria. During the Balkan war it had been suppressed. It had been refounded after the war. Now the chief attention of the youth organization was directed toward the socialist education of the youth. Apart

from the Marxist orientation of the Social Democratic party (to which the speaker belonged) there exists in Bulgaria a reformist orientation. This current has its own youth organization. One representative from the party and one from the trade unions are members of the Central Committee of the Marxist youth organization.

Stirner [*sic*]⁵⁴ (Göttingen) first described the struggle of the German youth *Vereine* against reformism. He said that not only the bourgeois but also the socialist groups are endeavoring to poison the workers with the fumes of militarism. The newspaper of the youth organization, *Arbeiter-Jugend*, which at first was edited in a radical-revolutionary spirit, later inserted articles in which a defensist policy was advocated. Many local youth groups protested resolutely against this. In many instances the young people refused to distribute newspapers which contained social-patriotic articles. Police measures against the proletarian youth were made more severe.

Notz (Stuttgart) and Dietrich (Karlsruhe) spoke in the same spirit.

Representatives of France, England,⁵⁵ and especially Italy, from which place three delegates were already on their way to Berne, gave information of a similar revolutionary line and of a similar struggle of the youth against war.

The delegates who had assembled at Berne represented 33,800 members, not including Germany and Russia.

At the beginning of the second day there arose a dispute concerning the Russian delegation After the majority of the Conference adopted the proposed order, i.e., every country to be given only one vote, the Russian delegates withdrew from the meeting in protest. A critical situation resulted. It was obvious that an incomplete Conference, especially one at which the belligerent countries were represented by Germany alone, could not have the desired success. Therefore, we reopened negotiations with the Russian comrades who had left the Conference and reached an agreement which satisfied them so that they returned on the following day.

The chief subject of discussion at the Conference consisted, of course, of the question of war and of the position of the Social Democratic parties and the socialist youth organizations. The fundamental report on that question was made by the leader of the Swiss Social Democratic party, Robert Grimm, jointly with Angelica Balabanoff. They introduced a draft resolution. After lively and heated debates, especially concerning the demand for total disarmament, the resolution was unanimously adopted.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Elsewhere Münzenberg gives Sturm as the Göttingen representative.

⁵⁵ Delegates from France and England were not present at the Conference.

⁵⁶ Given below, pp. 307-8.

With the adoption of that resolution the Youth International entered a new phase of its development.

For the first time in the history of the proletarian youth movement representatives of the socialist youth assumed an independent position with regard to political events and expressed their point of view.

. . . . At the beginning of the third sitting a statement was read which had been written by the Russian comrades, who the day previous had withdrawn from the Conference because of the order of voting. After a lively discussion the Conference decided to prove its readiness to do everything to complete the work in full harmony and to yield to the wishes of the Russian comrades by granting each country two votes in future ballots and by regarding Poland as a separate country. This decision satisfied the Russian comrades and they returned to the Conference.

After their return new dissensions sprang up between them and the majority of the Conference. The Russian comrades had worked out their own resolution on war and, in connection with this, on the tasks of the socialist youth organizations. They defended this resolution in long speeches. They subjected to sharp criticism the resolution proposed by the Bureau and adopted by the Conference on the preceding day. They demanded that the paragraph directed against the revisionists be made still sharper. It was necessary, they said, to pronounce against not only this war, but any war of an imperialist character. The methods of tactics should be openly stated in the resolution. After a lengthy and thorough discussion the resolution of the Russian participants at the Conference was rejected by a majority of thirteen votes to three. The amendments entered by the Russian delegates to the resolution already adopted on the preceding day were likewise rejected by the same majority of thirteen votes to three.⁵⁷

. . . . By nine votes to five the Conference adopted the proposal of the Scandinavian and Swiss delegates to advance the demand for total disarmament in all countries.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ According to the report in *Berner Tagwacht* the draft resolution of the representatives of the Central Committee of the R.S.D.L. party and the Polish delegation was rejected by fourteen votes to four and their amendments were rejected by the same number of votes. The resolution given below was adopted by thirteen votes to three. The Dutch delegate and part of the Russian delegation [the two representatives of the Central Committee of the R.S.D.L. party] voted against the resolution; the Polish delegate abstained. ("Internationale Sozialistische Jugendkonferenz in Bern. Offizieller Verhandlungsbericht," *Berner Tagwacht*, No. 88, April 17, 1915, p. 1.)

⁵⁸ The following proposal was adopted: "The International Conference of the socialist youth organizations invites the youth organizations of all countries to exercise influence on the labor movements of their respective countries with a view to introduce in the program the demand for complete disarmament" ("Internationale

Upon the proposal of the Dutch delegation it was resolved to celebrate an international antimilitarist youth day to take place at the same time in all countries in which there were socialist youth organizations.

The Conference decided to establish a "Liebknecht fund." The money of this fund was to serve to support an antimilitarist struggle and the victims of that struggle.

Of great significance for future development were the organizational resolutions of the Conference. They signified nothing less than a complete break with the Vienna Bureau. The first paragraph of the statute of the international youth secretariat unanimously adopted by the Conference read:

"The socialist youth organizations, which have joined the international association, establish a secretariat located temporarily in Switzerland."

Thus the Vienna Bureau forfeited its function and Robert Danneberg, who so far has been acting as International Secretary, was considered removed.

In the adopted statute a plan was outlined for a definite and strong international organization with an international newspaper, with regular contributions to the fund of the International Secretariat and with a number of obligations, organizational in character, assuring the transformation of the socialist youth organization into a truly competent organization.

Elections followed, which concluded the work of the Conference and as a result of which I [Münzenberg] was elected International Secretary, while the following comrades entered the International Bureau: OLAUSSEN (Norway), CHRISTIANSEN (Denmark), NOTZ (Germany), and CATANESI (Italy). . . .

THE WAR AND THE TASKS OF THE SOCIALIST YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

[Resolution of the International Socialist Youth Conference at Berne, April 5-7, 1915]⁵⁹

The International Socialist Youth Conference held on April 5, 6, and 7, 1915, at Berne and attended by delegates of nine countries, revives the decisions of the International Socialist Youth Conference at Stuttgart,

sozialistische Jugendkonferenz in Bern. Offizieller Verhandlungsbericht, Die Abrüstungsfrage," *Berner Tagwacht*, No. 88, April 17, 1915, p. 1). Both the Bolshevik and the Menshevik delegates voted against this resolution. (F. Weis, "Mezhdunarodnaia sotsialisticheskaiia konferentsiia v Berne," *Nashe Slovo*, No. 68, April 18, 1915, pp. 1-2.)

⁵⁹ *Berner Tagwacht*, No. 88, April 17, 1915, p. 1.

Copenhagen, and Basel, which appealed to the laboring youth of all countries to struggle against the war which is destroying the people and against militarism.

The Conference notes with profound regret the fact that, like the socialist organizations of the elders, the socialist youth organizations in most of the countries at the outbreak of war were not guided by the decisions mentioned above.

The present war is a result of the imperialist policy of the ruling classes of all the capitalist countries. In cases where it is characterized by the ruling classes and their governments as a defensive war, it is likewise the result of that policy which is hostile to the people and inseparable from capitalism. *The war is incompatible with the interests of the laboring class, whose vitality it endangers and destroys, whose organizations it cripples, whose activity against international exploitation it hampers.*

The civil peace policy, which wishes to reconcile the classes, is a policy of the resignation of Social Democracy as a party of proletarian class struggle and a policy of renouncing the vital interests and ideals of the proletariat.

Proceeding from these considerations, the International Socialist Youth Conference sounds the call to put an immediate end to the war. It welcomes heartily the attempts made by party groups in the belligerent countries and the resolution of the International Proletarian Women's Conference in particular to *force the ruling classes by means of the resumption of class struggle on the part of the workers to conclude peace.* The International Socialist Youth Conference declares it to be the duty of the young men and women comrades in the belligerent countries to support vigorously this ever-growing movement for peace. The Conference expects from the youth organizations of the neutral states an active support of this peace activity.

The Conference protests emphatically against attempts to place the socialist youth organizations at the service of the bourgeois young militarist guards [*Jugendwehr*] in order thus to divert the laboring youth from its real task: socialist education, the struggle against capitalist exploitation and against militarism.

In the face of the horrible results of the present war, which callously uses for cannon fodder young people who have scarcely passed school age, the Conference stresses the necessity of making clearer than ever to the young men and women workers of all countries the causes and the nature of the war and of militarism, the inevitable companions of a capitalist social order; of educating them in the spirit of international class struggle; and thus of rallying them more firmly and in greater numbers to the banner of revolutionary socialism.